

ALBERT EDWARD ROWE (1865-1918)

Thomas Rowe was born in Plymouth in 1822 and spent all his life there. His father, also Thomas, had moved there from Lamerton, a small village on the edge of Dartmoor. His mother Sarah was from Bristol. Thomas senior had a variety of jobs, possibly including some time at sea, but the couple later settled as publicans, and after Thomas senior's death in 1860, Sarah ran the Pennycomequick Inn in Devonport.

The modern city of Plymouth is an amalgamation of three towns, Plymouth, Devonport and Stonehouse, which were separate until the early twentieth century, but which together formed a substantial naval and trading port. In 1801, there were 45,000 inhabitants, but driven by the industrial revolution, the population of the three towns quadrupled in the following century, as village folk travelled there over considerable distances in search of the more lucrative work this growth provided.

Pennycomequick is today just a roundabout in central Plymouth hosting a small statue of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, but then it was a thriving part of central Plymouth and Devonport. The inn, later called the Penny Inn, survived until 2009.

Thomas Rowe junior married Jemima Foal, another immigrant to Plymouth, in 1842, and had at least three children, of whom only a daughter survived infancy. By this time Thomas had been appointed Town Crier, a post he held for many years in addition to his occupation as a bootmaker.

In medieval England, town criers were the chief means of news communication with the townspeople, since many were illiterate. Royal proclamations, local bylaws, market days, and advertisements were all proclaimed by a bellman or crier. Town criers were protected by law, as they sometimes brought bad news. Anything done by the town crier was done in the name of the ruling monarch and harming a town crier was an act of treason.

Jemima died in 1853 at the age of 34, and with a young daughter to bring up, Thomas soon married again. His new wife, Elizabeth Gill, was the daughter of William Gill, a local sawyer and timber dealer. They have seven children together, as well as bringing up the daughter of Thomas' first marriage.

Their fifth child Albert Edward Rowe was born on 13 March 1865 at their home at 10 Sussex Street, in Plymouth. Albert's father Thomas died in 1871 when Albert was only six years old, and his mother supported the family by working as a dressmaker. She lived into her 80s.

Albert left school early and started work as a clerk in a grocery shop. In 1887 he married Malaura Jane Metherell, originally from Tavistock, whose mother was also a widowed dressmaker.

Working as a commercial traveller and licenced victualler, Albert had five children with Malaura over the next seven years. Soon afterwards, the family moved to Redruth, where they ran a newsagent shop. They are recorded there together in 1896 when their sixth child Dorothy was born. By 1897, Albert is

shown in the local directory living alone in Redruth . The rest of the family had returned to Devonport, where Dorothy was baptised.

At Pool, about a mile from Albert, stood the Penrose mineral water factory. The owner, Richard Penrose, lived in nearby Illogan with his wife and five daughters.

The process for artificially aerating water was discovered in 1783 by Jacob Schweppe, a German born Swiss, but it was not until 1835 that the company he founded, Schweppes & Co of London, began adding fruit flavours, starting with lemon. They later added ginger beer and other flavours to the range and the increasing popularity of these drinks led to the establishment of a large number of mineral water factories across the country.

In February 1898 Mabel, one of Richard's daughters, became pregnant. Although baptised as Lucretia Mabel Penrose, she was always known as Mabel. Unmarried, she went to London, where the baby, Charles Guy Penrose, was born on November 5, 1898 at the West Square home of Miss Charlotte Sharman, the founder of a girls orphanage in Southwark. No father is named on his birth certificate.

Charlotte was a Baptist spinster who dedicated her life to the care of young girls who had lost at least one parent. Her standards were high and she had firm ideas on the care of young girls. The orphanage was home to over two hundred girls, all of whom managed to bath every Friday night using just four baths. They were well looked after, and even sent on seaside holidays. The girls were trained at the home, and on leaving at the age of seventeen were much sought after as nannies, teachers and domestic servants. The surviving records of the orphanage show that it was not its usual practice to take in male children or unmarried mothers for their confinement, although a few small babies were useful for the girls' training.

Although there is no documentary evidence of the identity of Charles' father, his daughter's paternal DNA is 50% Cornish and 50% Devon, so her grandfather was certainly from Devon. She shares DNA with a great granddaughter of Albert Edward Rowe, a newsagent from Plymouth who was running a newsagents shop in Redruth at the time of his conception. The level of match is consistent with a relationship of second cousins once removed, which they would be if he was indeed the father.

Later, Mabel was joined in London by Frederick Bawden, a senior employee at the factory, who had spent two years managing a goldmine in India before returning in 1899. Though they did not marry, Mabel took the name Bawden and lived with Fred in Kennington. Two years later, their daughter, Gertrude Ella, was born. Mabel soon went to live with her sister Ellen Eddy in St Just, the most westerly town in England, leaving the children in London. There she met and married James Williams, a miner aged 40, and had five further children. Together, they ran a public house in the area. James died in 1922 and Mabel married Josiah Trembath, a local market gardener. They lived in Mousehole, where she died, aged 69, in 1946. Both Mabel and Charles kept their relationship a closely guarded secret, and until recently, their living descendants were totally unaware of the existence of her first two children.

Fred also returned to Cornwall and the mineral water factory, and later married Mabel's cousin Winifred Evans. He could not have been Charles' father as he was in India at the time of conception.

Mabel's first two children, Charles and Gertrude, were boarded out and brought up by Henrietta Buckland in Gypsy Hill, London. Both children used the name Bawden at home and at school in Shooters Hill. Charles left school at the earliest possible date, his fourteenth birthday, and worked in the vulcanising industry. Using the name Buckland, he joined the RAF in 1918, and served for six months as a batman at the headquarters of the newly formed service, which had been established at the Hotel Cecil in the Strand, London. After his demobilisation at the end of the war, he returned to the hotel to work as a reception clerk.

In 1921, still living at Whiteley Road and using the name Buckland, he married Lillian Louise Rogers. Their only child was born in Camberwell in 1923. He separated from Lillian soon afterwards, and ran a series of newsagent shops. Charles met his second wife Eileen Joan May Brown in about 1946, though they had two children before they were able to marry. Eileen had changed her name to Buckland before the birth of their first child. Throughout his life, Charles kept the existence of his previous wife and child hidden from his other children, and it was only after his death in 1981 that his daughter Jane found and met her half brother and his family.

Charles' daughter Jane shares DNA with a great granddaughter of Albert Edward Rowe through his legitimate son Leonard Theodore Rowe. The match is consistent with a relationship of half second cousin once removed or closer, with 77% probability. She also shares DNA with a 3 great grandson of Albert's maternal grandfather William Gill the sawyer.

There are no obvious legitimate links between the Rowe family, who were almost exclusively from Devon, and the Penroses who were deeply rooted in Cornwall. Jane's paternal DNA is 50% Cornish and 50% Devon and Somerset, which strongly suggests that Albert Edward Rowe was the father of Charles Guy Penrose.

Albert soon returned to Devonport where he found work as clerk to a mechanical engineer. His wife Malaura died there in 1901 at the age of 34. He then married Eliza Dalton in 1903 and had four further children with her. He later worked as a house agent's assistant before his death in Plymouth on June 3 1918 at the age of 53.

Many of Albert's children were drawn to life in the services, although Elsie, his first born, married Frederick Hawke, a knitwear manufacturer. Albert Victor, Leonard, William and Leslie all served for long periods in the Royal Navy.

Reginald served in the RAMC during WW1 before a career at a builder's merchant. Irene married a sergeant in the army, and Dorothy volunteered in the WRAF in 1918 before her marriage.

Harry, a flight sergeant in the RAF, was killed in action in Iraq in WW2, and Arthur worked for HM Customs. Even Charles Penrose, Albert's purported illegitimate son, served briefly in the RAF before running and owning his newsagent shops.

